

Message Text

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ACTION SS-30

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FM AMEMBASSY ATHENS

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 2259

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 AF 3 ATHENS 0512

EXDIS

EO 16652: GDS

TAGS: PINT, GR

SUBJECT: GREECE AFTER EUPHORIA

1. SUMMARY. AS DEPARTMENT ALREADY AWARE, EUPHORIA WHICH PREVAILED IMMEDIATELY AFTER EJECTS OF NOVEMBER 25 AND DISAPPEARANCE OF PAPADOPOULOS FROM POLITICAL STAGE HAS GIVEN WAY TO BLEAK MOOD VERGIN UPON DESPAIR. AGAINST A BACKGROUND OF CONTINUED MAINTENANCE OF MARTIAL LAW THROUGHOUT GREECE, THE LACK OF AN ECONOMIC PROGRAM WITH SPECIFICS, COUPLEED WITH THE PRESSURES OF RISING PRICES AND THE IMPACT ON GREECE OF WORLD-WIDE ENERGY CRISIS, HAS CONTRIBUTED TO THE GROWING PESSIMISM ABOUT PROSPECTS UNDER NEW GOVERNMENT. GREEKS IN ALL WALKS OF LIFE--FROM FORMER POLITICIANS TO AVERAGE CITIZENS--SEEM INCREASINGLY DISPOSED TO BELIEVE THAT SITUATION IS BOUND TO DETERIORATE, PERHAPS TO POINT OF VIOLENCE, BEFORE CONSTRUCTIVE EVOLUTION TOWARD POLITICAL NORMALITY CAN BEGIN. REPORTED AND RUMORED ARRESTS, ALONG WITH REESTABLISHMENT OF YIAROS DETENTION CAMP, HAVE ADDED FURTHER ELEMENT OF DEPRESSION. POSSIBLE RECOURSE TO ISOLATED INCIDENTS OF VIOLENCE AND EVEN ORGANIZED RESISTANCE CANNOT BE EXCLUDED. END SUMMARY.

2. MARTIAL LAW CONTINUES TO BE IN FORCE THROUGHOUT GREECE SOME SIX AND A HALF YEARS AFTER THE APRIL 21, 1967 COUP. WITHIN GOVERNMENT CENTRAL PROBLEMS CONTINUE TO BE LACK OF OVERALL POLICY DIRECTION AND EFFECTIVE ADMINISTRATION. NOMINAL MINISTERS APPEAR AS FRONT MEN FOR MILITARY, CONFIDENTIAL

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EXECUTING RATHER THAN INITIATING POLICY. THEY ARE IN MANY CASES TAKING INSTRUCTIONS FROM SUBORDINATES OF IOANNIDES, WHOSE IDEAS ON HOW TO DEAL WITH SPECIFIC PROBLEMS FALL FAR SHORT OF REQUIREMENTS OF EFFECTIVE GOVERNMENT.

ABSENCE OF PROGRAM HAS RESULTED IN STOPGAP, AD HOC APPROACH THAT HAS FURTHER UNDERMINED PUBLIC CONFIDENCE. NO NEW TALENT HAS BEEN RECRUITED, AND IN ALL PROBABILITY, EVEN IF PRESENT REGIME SHOULD SUCCEED IN ENLISTING SKILLFUL AND EXPERIENCED ADMINISTRATORS, THEY WOULD BE FRUSTRATED BY LIMITED HORIZONS OF GOVERNING MILITARY HIERARCHY TOO UNSOPHISTICATED TO COMPREHEND DIMENSIONS OF PROBLEMS CONFRONTING GREECE, DOMESTIC OR INTERNATIONAL. IT SEEMS ONLY A MATTER OF TIME UNTIL THESE GOVERNMENT DEFICIENCIES REACH SUFFICIENTLY CRITICAL PROPORTIONS TO REQUIRE DRASTIC MINISTERIAL HOUSECLEANING AND REPLACEMENT, EVEN IF IT SERVES ONLY FOR COSMETIC PURPOSES, THEREBY ENABLING REGIME TO MAINTAIN ITS PRESENT LEASE ON LIFE. PERSONNEL PROBLEM IS FURTHER COMPLICATED BY FACT THAT INDIVIDUALS ASSOCIATED WITH PAPADOPOULOS GOVERNMENT, SOME OF WHOM WERE NOT WITHOUT PROFESSIONAL COMPETENCE, ARE VIRTUALLY EXCLUDED FROM CONSIDERATION, WHILE YOUNGER FORMER DEPUTIES FROM PRE-KOYU POLITICAL LIFE, POTENTIALLY ACCEPTABLE TO IOANNIDES AND HIS Coterie, REMAIN UNWILLING TO BECOME ASSOCIATED IN ANY WAY WITH PRESENT REGIME.

3. WITHIN MILITARY THERE IS REPORTEDLY INCREASING DISSATISFACTION WITH FAILURE OF ANDRoutsopoulos GOVERNMENT TO PRODUCE SOLUTIONS TO OBVIOUS PROBLEMS NOW BESETTING GREECE, ESPECIALLY IN ECONOMIC FIELD. IN FACT, THE GOVERNMENT HAS YET TO IDENTIFY PUBLICLY THE PRIORITY PROBLEMS FACING THE COUNTRY. SEGMENTS OF MILITARY OPINION ARE REPORTED TO BE DISSATISFIED WITH ANDRoutsopoulos' PERFORMANCE AS PRIME MINISTER AND ARE URGING HIS REMOVAL. AT SAME TIME THERE SEEM TO BE NO CANDIDATES OF REQUIRED COMPETENCE ON THE IMMEDIATE HORIZON TO SUCCEED HIM. MOREOVER, FACTIONALISM AND INTERNAL DISAGREEMENTS WITHIN MILITARY APPEAR TO BE BUILDING UP. SO FAR NO SERIOUS CHALLENGE TO IOANNIDES' SUPREMACY HAS EMERGED, AND HE IS CLEARLY TAKING STEPS TO RALLY CONTINUED SUPPORT. HOWEVER, THE POSSIBILITY OF VARIOUS DISSIDENT ELEMENTS WITHIN MILITARY COALESCING TO POINT OF THREAT TO PRESENT CONFIDENTIAL

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GOG AUTHORITY CANNOT BE RULED OUT, PARTICULARLY IF POPULAR RESISTANCE TO GOG, SO FAR CONFINED TO GRUMBLING LEVEL OF DISSATISFACTION, BECOMES OVERT AND VIOLENCE OCCURS. BUT THERE IS YET NO REASON TO BELIEVE MILITARY WILL NOT CONTINUE TO CALL THE SHOTS, NOR ARE THERE ANY GROUNDS FOR DOUBTING THEY WILL USE THE NECESSARY FORCE AND REPRESSION TO MAINTAIN THEIR POLITICALLY DECISIVE ROLE. DIVISIONS WITHIN THE ARMED FORCES ARE FREQUENTLY REPORTED, BUT THE NET POLITICAL THRUST OF THESE DIVISIONS REMAINS OBSCURE, VITAL AS THEY ARE LIKELY TO BE WITH RESPECT TO THE FUTURE OF GREECE. IN THIS CONTEXT, GREEK MILITARY NOW IN THE UNENVIABLE POSITION OF FULL RESPONSIBILITY FOR THE CONDUCT OF GREEK CIVILIAN AFFAIRS,

INCLUDING THE GREEK ECONOMY AND BALANCE OF PAYMENTS.

4. PRESENT GOVERNMENT MEMBERS, ALTHOUGH UNDOUBTEDLY AWARE OF SOME OF IRREGULARITIES AND PERSONAL PROFITERRING WITHIN PAPADOPOULSO GOVERNMENT, HAVE UNCOVERED MORE EVIDENCE OF SUCH MISDEEDS SINCE THEIR OWN ACCESSION TO POWER. AS THIS KNOWLEDGE HAS BEEN CIRCULATED PRESSURE HAS BEGUN TO BUILD UP WITHIN MORE PURITANICAL-MINDED ELEMENTS IN ARMY FOR ACTION AGAINST FORMER OFFICIALS INVOLVED IN PERSONAL GRAFT AND CORRUPTION. WE ARE NOW SEEING BEGINNINGS OF MOVE TO EXPOSE SOME OF SCANDALS OF PAPADOPOULOS REGIME, BUT IT IS QUESTIONABLE HOW FAR GOVERNMENT BASED UPON ARMY WILL WISH TO GO IN EXPOSING ITS OWN FORMER MILITARY COLLEAGUES. THIS COULD BE A DANGEROUS ROAD FOR IOANNIDES AND COULD EVENTUALLY EVEN INVOLVE HIM, AS INTIMATE COLLABORATOR OF PAPADOPOULOS, WITH RESPONSIBILITY FOR HAVE PERMITTED MALPRACTICES TO BUILD UP OVER A SIX AND ONE HALF YEAR PERIOD.

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TO SECSTATE WASHDC 2260

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 2 OF 3 ATHENS 0512

EXDIS

A PURGING OPERATION AFFECTING THE MILITARY COULD BE A SLIPPERY SLOPE INDEED WITH UNTOLD POSSIBILITIES FOR DAMAGES TO THE VERY INTEGRITY OF THE ARMED FORCES.

5. MILITARY CHARACTER OF PRESENT REGIME IS UNDERSCORED OPTICALLY BY VERY VISIBLE PRESENCE OF ESA PERSONNEL AND JEEPS THROUGHOUT ATHENS. RUMORED AND CONFIRMED ARRESTS AS WELL AS REINSTITUTION OF PRACTICE OF EXILE HAVE NOT IMPROVED PUBLIC MORALE. ABSENCE OF ANY DOMESTIC NEWS (EXCEPT FOR OFFICIAL GOVERNMENT HANDOUTS), SHUTDOWN OF VRADYNI AND CHRISTIANIKI, AND SPATE OF RUMORS (THE ONLY FREE MEDIUM OF COMMUNICATION REMAINING WITHIN THE COUNTRY) CIRCULATING ABOUT ARRESTS, POSSIBLE NEW GOVERNMENT INITIATIVES AND OPPOSITION EFFORTS TO PRESENT UNITED FRONT ADD TO GENERAL ATMOSPHERE OF UNEASINESS AND

UNCERTAINTY ABOUT FUTURE. STUDENTS TELL US THERE IS WIDESPREAD UNREST ON CAMPUSES, BUT SO FAR AT LEAST, EVEN MORE VOCAL GROUPS SEEM TO BE BIDDING THEIR TIME. GOVERNMENT IS OBVIOUSLY SEEKING TO CONVINCE POTENTIAL DISSIDENTS THAT ANY RETURN TO VIOLENT DEMONSTRATIONS WILL BRING PROMPT AND EFFECTIVE RETALIATORY ACTION, INCLUDING IMMEDIATE MILITARY SERVICE FOR STUDENTS, WHATEVER ITS COST IN LIVES OR PUBLIC REACTION. IT REMAINS TO BE SEEN WHETHER DELIBERATE PSYCHOLOGY OF REPRESSION AND GENERAL TRAPPINGS OF POLICE STATE WILL SUFFICE TO DISCOURAGE RECOURSE TO TERRORISM BY DISSIDENT ELEMENTS WITHIN COUNTRY.

6. IF, AS RESULT OF VIRTUAL HALT IN PUBLIC BUILDING
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PROJECTS AND MUCH PRIVATE CONSTRUCTION, THERE IS ECONOMIC SLOWDOWN OF PROPORTIONS TO PRODUCE CONSIDERABLE UNEMPLOYMENT, EVEN THE MOST PRUDENT FORECAST WOULD HAVE TO INCLUDE AT LEAST ISOLATED INCIDENTS OF VIOLENCE. WE HAVE BEEN TOLD BY JOURNALISTS WHO HAVE TRIED TO TAKE THE POLITICAL PULSE OUTSIDE ATHENS THAT GROWING SENSE OF TENSION AND OF DISSATISFACTION EXISTS. OUR CONGEN CONFIRMS TENSION AND UNEASINESS EXISTING IN NORTHERN GREECE, PERHAPS EXPLAINING CURRENT VISIT OF GENERAL IOANNIDES TO THAT AREA. UNEASINESS ABOUT FUTURE DEVELOPMENTS, AS WELL AS FEAR OF FURTHER INFLATION OF PRICES, HAVE PRODUCED RUN ON LOCAL SUPERMARKETS AND HOARDING OF KEY STAPLES DESPITE REPEATED GOVERNMENT ASSURANCES OF AMPLE STOCKS. THIS REACTION CLEARLY MAGNIFIES NOTABLY THE PROBLEM OF MANAGING THE GREEK ECONOMY.

7. OLD POLITICAL WORLD HAS GENERALLY DEFEATIST ATTITUDE. LEADING PERSONALITIES CONTINUE TO TALK IMPRECISELY ABOUT AGREEMENT AMONG ALL PARTIES ON NEED FOR GOVERNMENT OF NATIONAL UNITY, WITH KARAMANLIS MOST FREQUENTLY MENTIONED AS ITS HEAD. AT SAME TIME, IN ACCORDANCE WITH HISTORICAL EXPERIENCE WHICH NOW A POLITICAL ANACHRONISM, THEY STILL LOOK FOR SOME EXTERNAL DEUS EX MACHINA, PREFERABLY U.S., TO PRODUCE SUITABLE SETTING LOCALLY, AND WE SEE NO CONCRETE EVIDENCE OF THE DEVELOPMENT OF SPECIFIC OR PRACTICAL APPROACH ON THEIR PART. WHEN PRESS TO EXPLAIN HOW GOVERNMENT OF NATIONAL UNITY MIGHT EMERGE UNDER PRESENT CIRCUMSTANCE THEY ASSERT MILITARY IS DIVIDED AND THAT MANY IN ARMY WOULD FAVOR KARAMANLIS SOLUTION IF PRESENT GOV FOR ONE REASON OR ANOTHER FAILED. USUALLY THEY FALL BACK ON OLD THEME THAT IF US WITHDREW "SUPPORT" FROM PRESENT REGIME OR IF NATO MOVED AGAINST IT, POLITICAL NORMALIZATION WOULD BE QUICK TO COME. BEYOND SUCH VAGUE AND GENERAL FORMULATIONS, THEY HAVE LITTLE TO ADD. THEY ARGUE TIME IS AGAINST PEACEFUL SOLUTION AND HAVE BEGUN TO FORECAST LIKELIHOOD OF BLOODSHED AND NEW OPPORTUNITIES FOR LEFTIST ELEMENTS, COMMUNISTS INCLUDED,

TO EXPLOIT SITUATION. IN THIS CONTEXT, POSITION OF THE
"OLD" POLITICAL LEADERSHIP TOWARDS MARKEZENIS' EFFORT
TO LEAD THE COUNTRY BACK TO FREEE ELECTIONS AND POPULAR
SOVEREIGNTY MUST ALSO BE OF SOME CONCERN IN APPRAISING
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THEIR LIKELY INFLUENCE ON EVENTS IN THE FUTURE AHEAD.

8. ALL THIS ADDS UP TO A RATHER GLOOMY PROGNOSIS,
ESPECIALLY SINCE THERE IS A SELF-FULLFILLING ELEMENT
IN POLITICAL, ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL PROPHECIES. ON OTHER
HAND, IT IS TRUE THAT PRESIDENT AND PRIME MINISTER HAVE
STRESSED PUBLICLY AND PRIVATELY THEIR EARNEST INTENTION
TO RETURN TO CONSTITUTIONAL DEMOCRACY. ANDROUTSOPULOS
EVEN OUTLINED PROSPECTIVE CONSTITUTIONAL PRINCIPLES IN
HIS INAUGURAL ADDRESS. HOWEVER, THERE IS NO VISIBLE
FORWARD MOTION IN THIS DIRECTION. GOG HAS ALSO ENUNCIATED
PRINCIPLE OF GETTING MILITARY OUT OF KEY GOVERNMENT
POSITIONS WHICH THEY HAVE IN FACT ACHIEVED AS SHOWN BY
DISMISSALS FROM FOREIGN OFFICE OF SUCH PERSONNEL.
PRESIDENT OF GREECE, HOWEVER, REMAINS ON ACTIVE DUTY
AND IN UNIFORM, ALTHOUGH REGIME MIGHT MAINTAIN THAT
DISTINCTION BETWEEN CHIEF OF STATE AND HEAD OF GOVERNMENT
WHICH CONSTITUENT ACTS HAVE STRESSED BY RESTRUCTURING
DIVISION OF POWER BETWEEN PRESIDENT AND PRIME MINISTER
MAKES THIS IRRELEVANT.

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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 3 OF 3 ATHEN 0512

EXDIS

IN GENERAL FURTHER ACTION BEYOND
THE DECLARATION OF PRINCIPLES PROVIDING FOR THE REALIZATION
OF THE REGIME'S "OBJECTIVES" REMAIN INVISIBLE. INSTEAD, AN
ATMOSPHERE OF STAGNATION IN THE REGIME'S LEADERSHIP AND
ADMINISTRATION PREVAILS.

9. WE SHOULD NOT EXAGGERATE IMPACT OF ECONOMIC SITUATION

UPON THE POLITICAL VIEWS OF THE PEOPLE NOR THE OBVIOUS LEVEL OF GOVERNMENT INEFFICIENCY. LOCAL PRESS IS FULL OF NEWS OF ECONOMIC AND FINANCIAL CHAOS ELSEWHERE IN EUROPE, AND THE GREEK GOVERNMENT AND ITS BUREAUCRATIC APPARATUS HAS NEVER BEEN NOTED FOR EFFICIENCY. HOWEVER, THE UNUSUAL GENERAL CONTEXT HERE SHOULD BE GIVEN SPECIAL WEIGHT BECAUSE AFTER SOME SIX AND ONE-HALF YEARS OF DICTATORSHIP, A HIGH DEGREE OF FRUSTRATION HAS BUILT UP, WHICH LACK OF POLITICAL FREEDOM AND ABSENCE OF SOME POPULAR PARTICIPATION IN THE POLITICAL PROCESS HAVE REINFORCED.

10. IN OUR JUDGMENT FOREGOING ANALYSIS REINFORCES NEED FOR EARLY DECISION ON WAY U.S. SHOULD APPLY ITS STANDING POLICY IN CIRCUMSTANCES NOW PREVAILING HERE. IT IS A FACT THAT U.S. CONTINUES TO BE ASSOCIATED IN MIND OF PUBLIC WITH REGIME AND REGIME ITSELF CONTINUES TO MAKE AN EFFORT TO GIVE THIS IMPRESSION A FACTUAL BASIS, AS WITNESSED BY RECENT TV TREATMENT OF VISITS OF GENERALS ZAIS AND WILSON TO GREECE, AS WELL AS JUSMAGG CHIEF GENERAL RYDER'S PRESENT TRIP NORTH TO VISIT MILITARY UNITS. WHILE EMBASSY HAS MADE EVERY EFFORT TO KEEP OUR MILITARY CONFIDENTIAL

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PROFILE LOW, IN PRACTICE THIS HAS BEEN DIFFICULT BECAUSE OF REGIME'S CONTROL OF THE MEDIA OF COMMUNICATION AND ITS INTEREST IN CEMENTING ASSOCIATION OF U.S. MILITARY WITH THE REGIME HERE IN THE PUBLIC MIND. IT SEEMS NEARLY IMPOSSIBLE TO SEPARATE ORDINARY BUSINESS RELATIONSHIP WITH THE REGIME FROM A WIDESPREAD FEELING OF SUPPORT FOR IT.

11. THE PROCESS OF DISCREDITING THE GREEK MILITARY IN THE PUBLIC MIND IS UNQUESTIONABLY ACCELERATING. IF VIOLENCE DOES TURN OUT TO BE PARTH THAT SUCCESSFULLY RETURNS DEMOCRACY TO GREECE, IT WILL BE AT THE COST OF DISCREDITING THE GREEK MILITARY, FACT WHICH COULD SEVERELY DAMAGE OUR OWN SECURITY INTERESTS IN GREECE. AS DEPARTMENT AWARE, THIS IS ROAD WHICH ANDREAS PAPANDREOU IS PROMOTING AND ACTIVELY SUPPORTING. THE NOVEMBER 25 COUP GAVE THIS THRUST A REAL BOOST. THERE IS AN INSTABILITY BUILT INTO PRESENT REGIME'S POSTURE WHICH COULD LEAD TO FURTHER CHANGES AT AN EARLY DATE, ALTHOUGH EXACT DIRECTION IS STILL DIFFICULT TO PREDICT. INSTABILITY IS IN THE AIR.

12. IT ALSO APPEARS TO US THAT MORE AND MORE OUR SECURITY INTERESTS AND LONGER-RANGE OBJECTIVE OF RESTORATION OF PARLIAMENTARY GOVERNMENT ARE FUSING. IT WILL BE NECESSARY TO CONSIDER SERIOUSLY THE DAMAGING EFFECTS ON OUR POSTURE HERE OF PUBLIC SILENCE REGARDING DEVELOPMENTS IN THIS COUNTRY AND U.S. POLICY OBJECTIVES WITHIN FRAMEWORK OF A POLICY OF NON-INTERVENTION. GREEK REGIME NEEDS U.S. SUPPORT, AND WE NEED GREECE FOR SECURITY

PURPOSES. IT WILL BE FOR DEPARTMENT AND OTHER INTERESTED MEMBERS OF NATIONAL SECURITY COUNCIL TO DETERMINE HOW TO RECONCILE OUR VARIOUS INTERESTS IN THIS COUNTRY WITH THOSE OF NATO AND ITS SOUTHERN FLANK, AS WELL AS IN MEDITERRANEAN GENERALLY. THE TIME FACTOR IS MOVING AGAINST US. SOONER OR LATER WE SHALL BE FACED WITH THE ISSUE OF THE RELATIONSHIP OF PEOPLE TO FACILITIES AND MILITARY INTERESTS. NEEDLESS TO SAY, THE GEO-POLITICAL IMPERATIVES SHAPING GREEK FOREIGN POLICY WILL CONTINUE TO ARGUE STRONGLY FOR CLOSEST RELATIONS WITH THE U.S. AND NATO, WHATEVER TURN POLITICAL DEVELOPMENTS TAKE, BARRING A COMMUNIST TAKEOVER, WHICH MOST UNLIKELY UNDER
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THE WORST HYPOTHESIS THAT CAN BE FORMULATED IN THE PRESENT CIRCUMSTANCES.
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